

# The Futile Fidelity of Fink

WILLIAM FINK



SEEKS HIS WIFE IN MANITOBA AND MEXICO



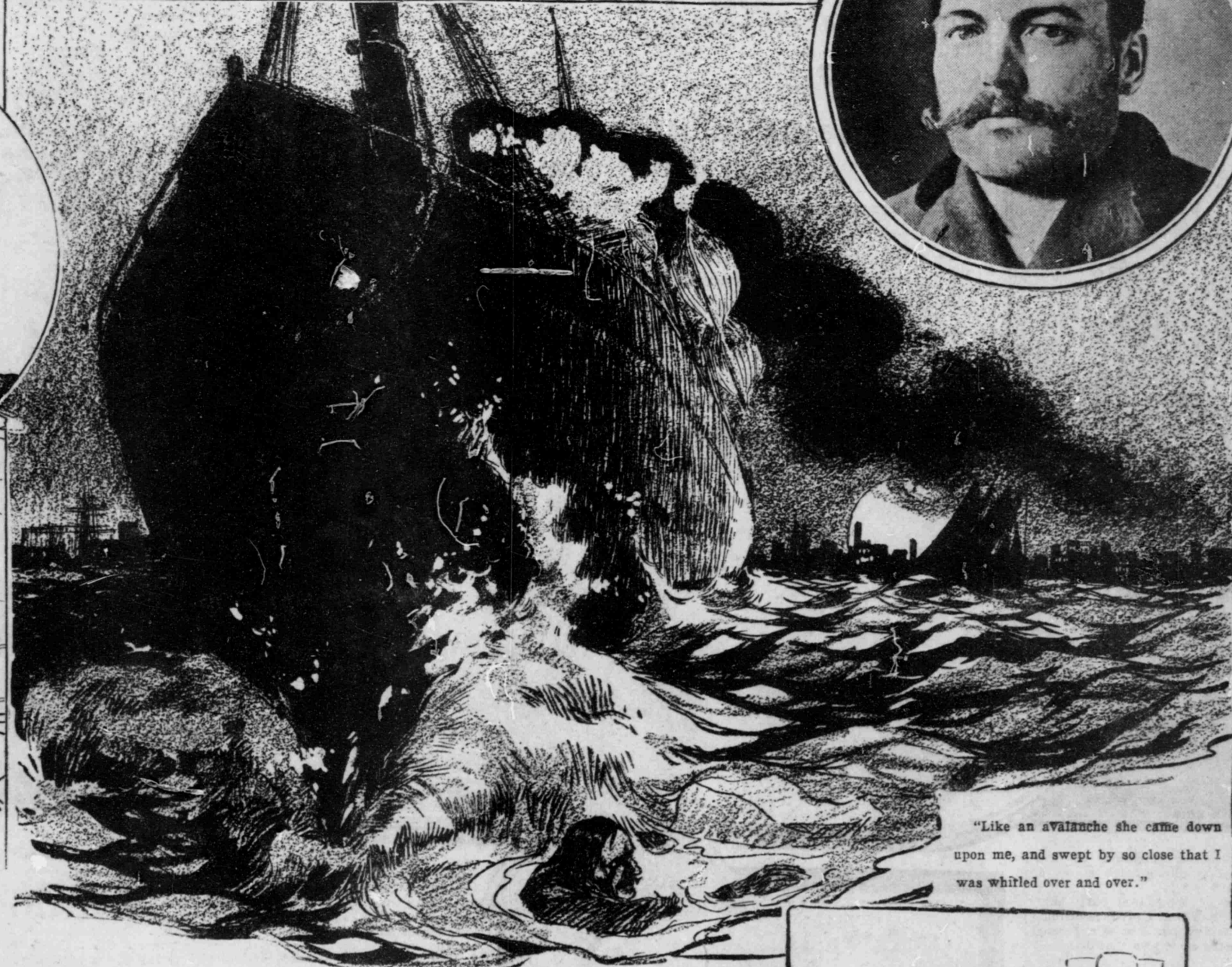
FINDS HER IN NEW YORK AND IS SPURNED



SWIMS TO BROOKLYN



FINK PLANS HIS ESCAPE



"Like an avalanche she came down upon me, and swept by so close that I was whirled over and over."

Love Led This Man to Break Jail, to Swim Hell Gate and to Search Four Years, From Mexico to Manitoba, Only to Be Sent Back to a Cell by the Wife He Hoped to Help

AFTER breaking out of prison, swimming the icy East River at Hell Gate, and searching all over Canada, the United States and Mexico for my wife and children, I was "thrown down" by her as soon as I had found her," said William Fink, gardener, now a workhouse prisoner at Blackwells Island.

"I am forty years old, and have been married a dozen years, but I don't understand women yet."

Fink, a rugged, burly German-American, who was formerly a sailor of the United States battleship Maine, was sent to Blackwells Island in November, 1899, for non-support of his wife and child. He disappeared upon the night of February 1 following, and as he had not been heard from up to the time of his arrest on February 13 in Harlem, it was supposed that he had been drowned in Hell Gate while trying to escape.

His wife and two children, one of whom was born while Fink was on the Island, supposed for a long time that he was dead. Mrs. Fink was mourning for him. When she suddenly discovered a few weeks ago that he was trying to find her, she notified the police, and he was arrested and sent back to the Island to finish his term of imprisonment.

## The Family Differences.

There seems to be a misunderstanding between Fink and his wife concerning his willingness to support her. She says that he has not done his duty, and it was for that reason that she separated from him and finally had him arrested for not supporting her.

She is a competent trained nurse. By her profession she supports herself, and her two singularly beautiful little girls, one of whom is with her grandmother in Germany.

Fink, sitting disconsolately in the pen at the Harlem Court, preparatory to being taken back to Blackwells Island, told the story of his daring escape by swimming Hell Gate in 1900, his long search for his wife and his final disappointment when he was arrested at her instigation.

"I love my wife," he said. "I have always loved her. When I first met her, just after I came from the navy and settled down in New York to live, I thought she was the sweetest little woman I had ever seen. We were married, and I started in to earn and save money to buy a little home."

"My thought was to have it at Wood-

lawn or out on Long Island, where we could have a German garden and grapevines growing about the house, as they do over the houses on the sunny slopes of the Rhineland at home. Our oldest girl was born, a little glimpse of the angels coming into my life with her. She was so beautiful and so much like what my sisters had been in Germany."

"Then came misunderstandings. My brother-in-law's family took an interest in everything that we did—too much interest, I used to think, and it caused petty jealousies on my part which had better never have been. But they were, and it's too late to remedy it now."

"I will not tell you all the sorrowful tale that followed. It will not interest the public. Suffice it to say that finally I was sent to Blackwells Island for non-support of my wife, and there I was that March night in 1900 when a friend wrote me the message which tortured me with the desire to get out of prison and fly to my wife, offering her support and comfort in her coming hour of trial."

"I thought of her alone and almost friendless in the great city, and of the long weeks of illness that must ensue before she could again take up her work, this time to support two children instead of one. It wrung my heart. I was more sorry than I can tell you for all that had happened."

"Being a gardener, I had been permitted to work outside the prison a good deal, and on this particular night was out late. I could look across the dark water to where the lights of the great city twinkled like the stars in the sky. I knew that over there, friendless and alone, was my wife, and that now she needed me more than she had ever needed me before."

"In the agony of that moment everything was forgotten. I forgot all the quick, angry words, all the hard looks and the harder thoughts. All that I remembered was that she was alone and in trouble."

"Without more thought I turned in the growing darkness, ran along the shore of the Island toward Hell Gate, and pulling my cap over my eyes, sprang into the water and struck out for the Long Island shore. There were too many boats plying up and down the nearer channel. There were too many sharp-eyed policemen on the Manhattan shore. I had friends in Brooklyn, and I could find them. I could change my wet clothes under kindly roofs there."

"And, after all, I had only six months more to serve, and what difference did it make."

"The water was icy cold. Now and then a great piece of black ice bumped into me as I swam, and threw me under water. A steamer, belated in coming through Hell Gate, suddenly loomed up in the darkness, and with her lights glistering high in the air above, bore down directly upon me."

"I swam desperately to get out of the way. I cried out to the watch on deck, but they could not hear my cry in the roar of the water."

"Like the rush of an avalanche she came down upon me, and swept by so close that I was whirled over and over by the wave that rolled away from her nose."

"Then I regained my voice and swam toward the shore, and finally, chilled through and through, crawled out, tired and numb, on the Long Island side."

"Then began the search for my wife. I went to the old home, where we had lived at first so happily, and at last so unhappily, confidently expecting to find her there. A strange woman answered my knock and showed me by a glance into the flat that my wife and her furnishings were gone and a new tenant lived there."

"I searched the homes of the people my wife knew. Either they would not or could not tell me anything about my wife. They all claimed to know nothing. I could not find my brother-in-law or any of his people. It was as though they were all dead."

"At last I found the janitor of a house near where we had lived. He claimed to have heard that my wife and her people had gone to Canada. He didn't know, but suggested Manitoba. It was a long and disheartening search that took me through the Canadian country, looking into every wayside village for a glimpse of the face I loved and the sound of the familiar voice."

"Once by the roadside I came upon the camp of some American emigrants going by easy stages to the grain country in the Great Northwest. Beside the fire, leaning over a newborn baby held close to her breast, was a woman whose form and outline, even though she was back to me, sent a thrill through me. Rushing forward, I touched her upon the shoulder lightly, and whispered tremblingly the name of my wife."

In New York and Mexico.

"But the face that startled woman turned to me was that of a stranger, and, apologizing, I turned away with a heavy heart."

"Then I came back to New York, and not finding her, and getting the idea

that she might have gone to Mexico to escape me, I went there and searched through the countryside around the City of Mexico, where a great many Americans are engaging in fruit culture.

"Coming back to New York, I picked up an old newspaper printed on the day following my escape from the Island, and found the report had been circulated that I was drowned. Then I understood. My wife supposed that I had died. She may have gone back to Germany, I thought, and I wrote to her friends there. I got no answer."

"Then one day I found her by accident. I met her face to face on the street, she and my little girl, whom I had never seen, a baby in her trundle carriage. The sight brought the tears to my eyes, and, after I had made many promises and had gone to work, my wife consented to return to me, and we lived together that winter."

"It was then that I heard that the keeper at the Island had lost his place through my escape, and that I was held responsible for his ill-luck. The news put my break from jail in a new light, and the desire to return and give myself up was continually with me."

"Perhaps this made me moody and fretful, for almost as soon as Spring came my wife disappeared again—probably offended with me for something or other—and, try as I would, I could find no trace of her."

"I searched continually. I walked the streets and the parks hoping to find some trace of her. But I could not. I was heartbroken, and was determining to return to the Island and give myself up when one day I found a man who now where she was."

"He put me in communication with



BACK TO THE ISLAND

her, and I found that she had sent one of the children home to Germany and had given the other to her sister for keeping, at her home on West 118th street."

"On Friday night, February 12, I had planned to meet her, and talk it over. I had a good place to work and was getting good money. I could take care of her. I determined that nothing should ever part us again. I knew that it had not been her fault that we had parted."

She was always the soul of goodness. I went into a Harlem saloon where I was to meet the man who would take me to her."

"A man who proved to be Detective McEvoy, of the West 125th street station, came up and shook hands with me, claiming he knew me. I didn't remember him, but he got me to admit that I was William Fink. Then, with Detective Hawthorne, he arrested me and I was brought here."

## SHE CAUSES HIS ARREST

"I am going back to serve the rest of my term, and I have discovered that it was my wife who caused my arrest and who is sending me back to the Island. I have lived a good many years and have learned many things, but I now am ready to admit that I do not understand women."

"I have searched for her the best part of four years with the intention of making her a good home and taking care of her, and now at the end of it I find that it is this woman whom I love and want to help who is sending me back to the Island, and will probably make a fresh charge against me at the expiration of my term."

"No, I can't understand the heart of a woman."

## "Tsar Kolokol," Russia's Giant Bell, Weighs 222 Tons

ON a granite pedestal at the foot of the belfry tower of Ivan the Great, in the Kremlin, stands the Tsar Kolokol, the King of Bells.

In the sixteenth century the art of casting bells was brought to perfection in Russia, and Olearius, Secretary to a Dutch Embassy to Moscow in 1626, asserts that a great bell was cast in the reign of Boris Godunof. During a fire in the reign of Alexis this bell fell to the ground and was broken. In 1654 it was recast and weighed 288,000 pounds.

In 1674 it was suspended from a wooden beam at the foot of the tower, from whence it fell on June 19, 1706, during a fire. Its fragments lay on the ground until the reign of the Empress Anne, by whose orders it was again recast in 1733 by the bell-founder Ivan Matorine.

Owing to the falling of some heavy rafters during yet another fire in 1737, the bell fell a distance of fifteen feet, buried itself deep in the ground, and a piece was knocked out of its side. According to some accounts, this was owing to an imperfection in the metal caused by jewels and other treasures having been thrown into the liquid metal by the ladies of Moscow. During the reign of Nicholas I. in the year 1839, the architect of St. Isaac's Cathedral at St. Petersburg, M. de

Montferand, took upon himself the difficult task of raising the bell, and completed the operation with much skill.

Its weight at present is 444,000 pounds, its height from the top of the bell and cross placed upon it by the order of the Emperor Nicholas I. is twenty-six feet four inches, and its circumference sixty-seven feet eleven inches. Its maximum thickness is two feet, and the weight of the broken piece about eleven tons. These measurements were taken by Major G. W. Whistler, civil engineer, the father

of the late James MacNeill Whistler, the artist. It bears the following inscription, the dates of which do not agree with those cited above from "Murray's Guide to Russia":

"Alexis Mikhailovitch, of happy memory, Autocrat of Great and Little Russia and White Russia, ordered a copper bell, weighing 8,000 poods to be cast for the Cathedral of the Pure and Glorious Assumption of the Virgin in the year 7162 of the Creation of the World and 1645 of the birth of Jesus Christ. This bell was in use from the year 7167 of the Creation of

the World, A. D. 1668, until the year 7208 of the Creation and A. D. 1701, in which year, on June 19, it was damaged in a great fire which raged in the Kremlin; it was mute until the year 7239 of the Creation, A. D. 1725. The All Powerful and Glorious Empress Anna Ivanovna caused the metal of the bell, weighing 8,000 poods, to be recast, to the Glory of God and the Holy Trinity and in honor of the Holy Virgin of the Cathedral of her Glorious Assumption, and added 2,000 poods of new material; the year 7— of the Creation, A. D. 172—, being the fourth year of Her Majesty's glorious reign."

## HOW GEN. LEE ROBBED A "ROBBER" IN ROME

QUARTERMASTER General Lee, of the army, was traveling in Europe some years ago with his wife. The long, hot, dusty trip to Rome from Naples had quite fatigued Mrs. Lee, and she retired directly after dinner.

The General, eager for the sights of the city, asked a friend in the hotel to direct him to the Coliseum. He would see it as Lord Byron saw it, by moonlight.

The directions were readily given, and with them a warning to look out for the clever pickpockets that infested the region. With suppressed emotion the General approached the historic arena.

On entering the vast enclosure he noticed a figure in the shadow some distance away. The person approached and saluted, but the General, remembering the warning, turned away and walked to the far side of the enclosure. The stranger followed at a respectful distance.

Again the General shifted his base of observation, and still his shadow pursued. "This is decidedly unpleasant," thought the General. "I'll just get out of here before anything happens. I'll look at my watch as an excuse, for my retreat must be justified and orderly." Then he felt for his watch. It was gone! Caution

turned to anger, and anger brought the lust for fight.

The soldier was in better trim, for finally the stranger collapsed, and the guard, rushing on him, bowled him over and with little effort recovered his watch and fob.

On his return to the hotel he found Mrs. Lee anxiously waiting. In explanation of his absence he told his experience. "But," he concluded, "I got my watch all right, and he produced the timepiece in triumph. 'Your watch!' cried Mrs. Lee in horror. 'Your watch? Why—why you've robbed some innocent person. You left your watch with me to tell the time by before you left the hotel!'

"I ADMIT I CAN'T UNDERSTAND THE HEART OF A WOMAN."—William Fink

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